

One in eight in state have asthma

» THE SURVEY SAYS:

"Asthma is a very big problem in California," says E. Richard Brown.

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Nearly one in eight Californians has been struck with asthma, according to a new report that gives the first comprehensive picture of the disease in the state.

About 11.9 percent of Californians, or 3.9 million residents, have been diagnosed with asthma at some point in their lives, researchers at the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research said in a report released Tuesday.

That's significantly higher than the estimated national average of 10.1 percent, but principal investigator E. Richard Brown said that the state and national numbers are not comparable because the California numbers are more precise.

What is clear, Brown said, is that "asthma is a very big problem in California. Nearly 3 million people who have active asthma, meaning they've had symptoms in at least the last 12 months. Many are school-age children losing time at school and experiencing threats to their health."

The figures released Tuesday were the first wave of data from the California Health Interview Survey of 2001, conducted by UCLA re-

searchers in collaboration with the California Department of Health Services and the Public Health Institute, a Berkeley nonprofit.

The \$11.6 million project, the first of its kind and envisioned as a biennial effort, surveyed 55,428 households by phone between November 2000 and September 2001 on a range of health issues.

The data related to asthma was released first to coordinate with a new anti-asthma initiative by the California Endowment, a Woodland Hills health care foundation.

The survey shows asthma hits American Indians and Pacific Islanders especially hard — 20.8 percent of adults in

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ECRMC receives \$450,000 grant to find ways to reduce asthma

STAFF REPORT

The California Endowment, a health foundation, awarded \$450,000 to El Centro Regional Medical Center to seek ways to reduce asthma locally.

The grant is part of the Woodland Hills-based endowment's \$12 million, three-year statewide program to improve the environments where children with asthma live, learn and play.

The program, Community Action to Fight Asthma, is to form or expand a network of local partnerships that bring together concerned parents, community leaders and organizations from the public, private and nonprofit sectors to reduce asthma triggers in indoor and outdoor environments.

"The California Endowment is pleased to support the El Centro Regional Medical Center, and its efforts to mitigate the prevalence and im-

nity," said Dr. Robert K. Ross, president and chief executive officer of the California Endowment, in a prepared statement.

Virgie Galindo, El Centro Regional chief nursing officer, said the hospital is pleased to be one of the award recipients.

"It is well documented that sustained, effective clinical intervention, combined with awareness and mitigation of environmental triggers of asthma, helps improve the quality of life of children suffering from asthma," she said in a press release.

In the same release, the endowment, citing information from the 2001 California Health Interview Survey, says nearly 3 million Californians suffer from asthma symptoms.

"Approximately 667,000 of those Californians are school-aged children ages 6 to 17," it says.

The California Endowment (www.calendow.org) was established in 1996.

ASTHMA: Many suffer from illness

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each racial group reported having asthma at some point in their lives. That compares to 16.2 percent of black adults, 13.1 percent of whites, 9.2 percent of Asians and 7 percent of Latinos.

Children in the survey were more likely to suffer from asthma than adults. About 8 percent of adults, but 9.6 percent of children, reported having asthma symptoms in the year before they were surveyed.

The survey found asthma rates varied greatly among California's 58 counties. Only 5.7 percent of people in Mon-

terey and San Benito counties reported asthma symptoms in the last year, compared with 14 percent in Solano County in the greater Bay Area.

Brown said the study did not seek to determine the reason for the different rates, but that poverty, air pollution, inadequate access to health care and other factors all play a role.

"I don't think you can reasonably point your finger at one set of factors and say that's the reason," Brown said. "What we do know is that asthma can be controlled effectively by working on educating people about the environmental triggers that may affect them, improving air quality and providing good access to effective medical management."